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SIPDIS

FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD, EUR/RPM AND EUR/ERA  
OSD FOR POPOVICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - MARCH 26, 2009

**¶1. (U) MOVING TOWARD QUALIFICATION FOR VISA WAIVER PROGRAM:**

From March 18-20, representatives CA/P/IP, L/CA and TSC visited Zagreb to begin negotiations on an arrangement to share terrorist screening information under HSPD-6. The negotiating team met with representatives from the Croatian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior as well as officers of the Croatian security services. Croatian government representatives were well-prepared and the sides were able to quickly come to agreement. The final arrangement is expected to be signed soon after it is confirmed by the respective governments. Completion of an information sharing arrangement under HSPD-6, required for participation in the Visa Waiver Program, will bring Croatia one step closer to its goal of qualifying for inclusion in this program. (RElvikis)

**¶2. (U) BANDIC STILL LEADING POLLS DESPITE ANOTHER SCANDAL:**

Zagreb mayor Milan Bandic would receive about 30% of the first round vote according to a telephone poll of 500 hundred people in mid-March published by the political weekly Globus.

Newly announced independent candidate Josip Kregar, well-respected anti-corruption hawk and Dean of the Law Faculty at Zagreb University, was in second place with about 11% of the vote. All other candidates including Jasen Mesic of the Croatian Democratic Union and Radimir Cacic of the Croatian Peoples Party polled below 10 percent (reftel ZAGREB 00120). The poll predicts turnout would be slightly above 50% and that around 28% of voters are still undecided about whom to support. Kregar and others are trying to portray a vote against Bandic as a vote against corruption in the city.

Meanwhile the mayor \* who we still expect to win \* is defending himself against more accusations of corruption. Bandic detractors claim the city paid a grossly inflated amount of around \$300,000 for two public toilets installed near the main square, which benefited a company owned by a close friend of the mayor. (DMeges)

**¶3. (U) 2008 WAR CRIMES MONITORING REPORT RELEASED:**

A team of three NGOs monitoring war crimes trials in Croatia organized a conference to present their 2008 monitoring report. More than 100 people attended the conference, including President Mesic, the Justice Minister, the presidents of the Supreme Court and the largest County Courts, and representatives from ICTY, OSCE, EU, and other foreign missions. The report highlighted the group's main findings, concerns and recommendations. All of the high-level Croatian representatives, including President Mesic, agreed that war crimes should be prosecuted regardless of the ethnicity of perpetrators, the revision of all open and in absentia convictions should continue, strong cooperation with the ICTY should be encouraged. The Croatian leadership showed a firm commitment and willingness to continue cooperation with civil society members dealing with trial monitoring. (DBolsec/VDjukic)

**¶4. (U) CROATIA IMPLEMENTS NEW HEALTH REFORMS:**

Minister of Health Milinovic delivered an enthusiastic brief to the media on Tuesday in which he reported on results from the newly implemented health reforms. As the principal author of the reform, the Minister was quick to boast about profits that the reform has brought to the health system in just three months of implementation. Some of the most substantial measures include a greater percentage of contributions from pension and obligatory car insurance, newly introduced co-pays for health service and supplemental health insurance. The total profits realized in terms of these measures is 1.3 billion HRK (approx. \$237 million). The Minister also spoke of other measures that have helped the Ministry of Health realize profits and savings for the health system and have stopped, for now, the trend of generating new debt within the health system. (DMatijas)

BRADTKE